

Letters to the Editor

Many readers have written the Book Review about Dr. Rollo May's critical review of "Dianetics: The New Science of Mental Health" by L. Ron Hubbard. A selection of these letters and Dr. May's reply follow.

"Dianetics"

TO THE EDITOR:

THE Book Review is to be commended for being the first major medium to review L. Ron Hubbard's "Dianetics" (July 2). Others have been avoiding it like the plague because of the common editorial engram which calls for evaluation by "Authority." No Authority who has not practiced dianetic therapy, both as Auditor and Pre-clear, can possibly form any valid opinion of it.

Your reviewer, Dr. Rollo May, illustrates the latter point perfectly. He is a distinguished psychologist. His book, "The Meaning of Anxiety," is admira-



ble. His summary of the theory of dianetics is fair and honest, except for his wholly false implication that Hubbard opposes intercourse during pregnancy (Cf. pp. 157-8 and 265-6 of the book). But Dr. May has obviously not practiced dianetics, even in an experimental session.

If he had, he would not speak of "the superficial theories in this book," nor would he affirm the necessity, and deny the possibility, of studying the 270 cases. They are worth studying, to be sure. But the only evidence anyone needs to verify the dianetic hypothesis is to put it to a protracted personal test. I have done so.

Dr. May is mistaken in supposing that dianetic reverie is comparable to psychoanalytical free-association or to hypnosis. He is in error in assuming that dianetics is an oversimplification of the psyche. Though its basic postulates and procedures are as simple as those of any science, its operational practice is most complex. As for "the absurdity of trying to view man as a machine," our reviewer here misses the central point: "Man is intended to be a self-determined organism." (p. 229).

Finally, dianetics, far from excluding "the social sciences, learning, theory and ethics," embraces them all. In my judgment, it bids fair to revolutionize them all in a new synthesis. . . . To paraphrase H. G. Wells: History has become a race between dianetics and catastrophe. Dianetics will win if enough people are challenged,

in time, to understand it. Dr. May's review will at least have this effect. Congratulations!

FREDERICK L. SCHUMAN,
Williamstown, Mass.

Hubbard's View

TO THE EDITOR:

WOULD you please ask Rollo May, who reviewed "Dianetics," to read the book? Publishing such a review gives to the public a very lopsided idea of what the professional world thinks of dianetics. Men less emotional than Rollo May have examined the tested dianetics

Professors of biology, political science, sociology, psychology and physics have given dianetics a fair and impartial survey and have discovered in it some of the answers for which they have long sought. But their opinions, as should be the case with men of science, were based on a sound investigation and applications of the science and were about their own economics

The most glaring evidence that May did not study his subject before he wrote his review lies in his confusion of dianetics with a mechanical conception of the human mind. Nowhere in the handbook of dianetics does anyone label the human mind a machine. I fear here that May . . . is not aware of the ridicule dianetics has thrown upon those who always believe the human mind was too complex to be understood. A statement that the subject of one's profession is too complex to be understood is an admission that one does not have any comprehension of his subject and it seems to me that in his review May declares himself and psychology incapable of understanding or helping in the field of humanities. Those who operate on the basic tenet that the subject of their profession cannot be understood, are operating upon a defeatist psychology

ON a subject as carefully formulated and as widely tested as dianetics a scientific man would normally be expected to make an inquiry before expressing opinions. If he cannot bring himself to do so, then he is operating upon an emotionalism which in itself invalidates his scientific accuracy.

From medical doctors, psychiatrists and laymen the Hubbard Dianetic Research Foundation is receiving thousands upon thousands of letters which state that dianetics has been tested and found valid, that it does precisely what it says it does. The derogatory letters are in the ratio of 1 to 505 letters of approval. Diseases and mental aberrations hitherto untouched by any past art are reported as surrendering to dianetic technique. Should you care to inspect the matter you will find that not one single person indulging in capricious and superficial opinionation has read fully, studied carefully or applied dianetics

L. RON HUBBARD,
Elizabeth, N. J.

A Reply

TO THE EDITOR:

BELIEVE my review is open to at least one sound criticism, namely, that of trying to deal with "Dianetics" as a scientific work. When a reviewer opens a book and reads in the very first sentence, "The creation of dianetics is a milestone for Man comparable to his discovery of fire and superior to his invention of the wheel and arch," he doesn't know whether to laugh or to pinch himself to see if he is dreaming or to conclude he is reading a novel

Reading on, I found that a person's problems are determined not only by pre-natal "recordings" on the cells of the fetus, but—believe it or not—"suddenly it was discovered that recording begins in the cells of the zygote—which is to say, with conception" (p. 130). The author's data for this, given in the second sentence following, "to date sooner or later startle themselves by finding themselves swimming up a channel or waiting to be connected with" (p. 130). Then I read later that in many cases of premarital conception the "patient yet unborn" discovers "himself at his parents' wedding" (p. 399). When Hubbard added "And these cases are often very difficult to resolve since they contain so much secrecy in their engrams" (p. 399), I could for once believe him!

It was obvious to me as the reviewer that I was in a world of fantastic theories. When present-day psychological science is patiently trying to find empirical evidence for the psychological effects of the birth experience, I saw that Hub-



bard's blithe trip back to conception took the whole problem out of any possible relation to what can be proved or disproved

With regard to Professor Schuman's contention that dianetics does not view man as a machine, let me simply quote a few from the scores of such references in the book: "Consider the analytical mind as a computing machine" (p. 43); apropos of the auditor's practicing on cases, "there is nothing which develops an understanding of a machine like handling it in action" (p. 173); the "auditor can turn somatics on and off in a patient like an engineer handles switches (p. 281). The remark that man is



intended to be self-determining is only one of the contradictions which make it almost impossible to find a consistent scientific position in this book which one can discuss objectively.

Mr. Hubbard assumes that if I refuse to subscribe to his theories, I have not read the book; and that if I reject the oversimplified dianetics view of man, I must believe the human mind too complex to understand and therefore am a defeatist! Wise, it is curious logic to imply that in not accepting dianetics I must be motivated by ulterior economic concerns. One would think, on the contrary, that if a psychologist's motivations were chiefly economic he would, observing what a booming project Mr. Hubbard has got started over there in Elizabeth, N. J., climb on the band-wagon!

THE point brought out that one should simply test dianetics in a "protracted personal test," also demonstrates that there is in this method no conception of the profundity and variability of the human psyche. Quite apart from the fact that my job was to review a book, not to set up an experimental laboratory, the implication that one can test a theory purporting to cure severe neuroses and psychoses in a few weeks' time is ridiculous. It takes years of follow-up to test what really occurs in cures.

I do not deny that some people may have been cured of symptoms by means of dianetics. People can be cured of symptoms by all kinds of means—by hypnosis, Coué autosuggestion, the bone-pointing practices of primitives, etc. Transference and autosuggestion "cures" are easy enough to achieve, but no reputable therapist considers them true cures.

The data in this book suggest that the dianeticists get seeming "cures" because they have an all-embracing system of autosuggestion which is air-tight in that it is set in an area (the pre-natal) which is immune from proof or disproof. Until some data are offered which are more than a claim that the theory is "entirely scientific" (together with misleading quotations in the appendix about method in philosophy and in atomic science), the book makes no connection with any objective scientific criteria. Dianetics first appeared in the magazine *Astounding Science Fiction* and it is in this magazine that you can learn, if you wish, about Mr. Hubbard and his work.

ROLLO MAY,
Siasconset, Mass.